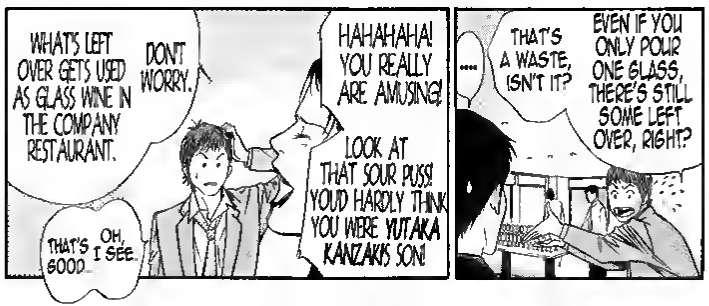
#31 An invitation to a magnificent ball.

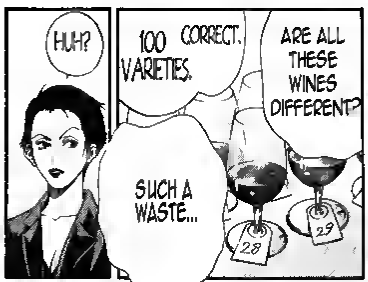
ARE YOU SURE THIS IS OK, SHIZUKU?
THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME BEFORE THE WINE COMPETITION, AND YOU'RE TAKING INVITATIONS FROM SOMEONE YOU HARDLY KNOW...
IT'S BECAUSE THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME...
SHE'S A WINE IMPORTER, AND TOMINE ISSEI IS BACKED BY HER...
IF THIS GOES WELL, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET SOME GOOD INFO.
I GUESS...
.....
YOU SEE, THE SAION CORPORATION IS HOLDING A SPONSORED EVENT TONIGHT.

THIS COMPANY IS HUGE.
WOW...THEY EVEN HAVE A RESTAURANT AND A WINE BAR ON THE TOP FLOOR.
IT WILL BE A GATHERING OF OUR MAJOR CLIENTS. RESTAURANT OWNERS, MANAGEMENT FROM PROMINENT WINE STORES AND THE LIKE. IN ESSENCE, A SAMPLING MEETING.
SO THAT'S WHY IT'S SO BUSY IN HERE?
OH.
YES.
A SAMPLING MEETING?
AND WHY AM I AT THIS EVENT?
THE BUYERS ARE PRESENTED WITH 5 WINES IN A BLIND TASTING.
FROM THESE, THEY CHOOSE WHICH THEY WISH TO PLACE IN THEIR STORES.
CLINK
NATURALLY...

WOAH!
TO SELECT A WINE.


WHAT'S LEFT OVER GETS USED AS GLASS WINE IN THE COMPANY RESTAURANT.
DON'T WORRY.
HAHAHAHA! YOU REALLY ARE AMUSING!
LOOK AT THAT SOUR PUSS! YOU'D HARDLY THINK YOU WERE YUTAKA KANZAKI'S SON!
THAT'S GOOD...
OH, I SEE.

....
THAT'S A WASTE, ISN'T IT?
EVEN IF YOU ONLY POUR ONE GLASS, THERE'S STILL SOME LEFT OVER, RIGHT?

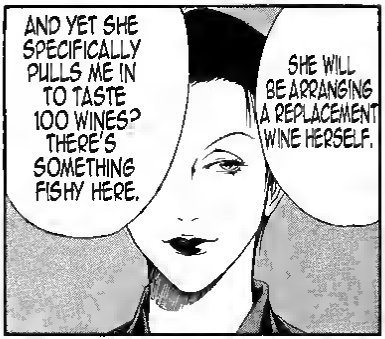

HUH?
100 VARIETIES.
CORRECT.
ARE ALL THESE WINES DIFFERENT?
SUCH A WASTE...
28
29

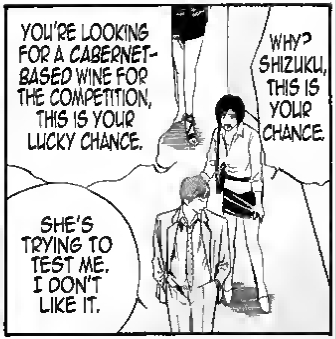
WELL?
IMPRESSED?

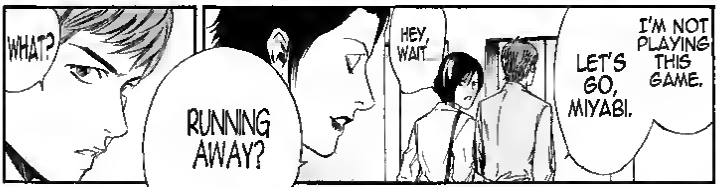
THE BOTTLE TOMINE HAD TASTED WAS NOT DAMAGED, AND SO IT WASN'T NOTICED UNTIL TODAY.
IT WAS STORED IMPROPERLY, AND AS A RESULT THE WINE WAS DAMAGED.
HOWEVER, WHEN ONE OF THE WINES WAS IN TRANSIT THOUGH HONG KONG...
HUH?
THE TRUTH IS, TOMINE ISSEI HAS ALREADY DECIDED ON THE 5 WINES.
BUT WE CAN'T PRESENT A DAMAGED WINE TO OUR CUSTOMERS.
I THOUGHT YOU COULD IMPRESS HIM,
BY CHOOSING THE BEST WINE OUT OF ALL THE WINES WE HAVE IN STOCK.
WOULDN'T IT BE EASIER TO ASK TOMINE TO CHOOSE ANOTHER WINE?
BUT WHY ME?
I GUESS I UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION.
HMM.

VERY GOOD.
THEN LET US BEGIN.
MA'AM.
ALL IS READY.
I'D LIKE NOTHING BETTER, BUT HE'S ON A PLANE FLYING TO FRANCE ON BUSINESS.
IT'S NOT EVEN POSSIBLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH HIM.
TRY ALL THESE WINES!
CHOOSE THE ONE THAT YOU THINK TODAY'S WINE CONNOISSEURS WILL MOST ENJOY.
THE WINES ARE A WIDE RANGE OF BORDEAUX.
54
55
HOWEVER, THE MAJORITY ARE CABERNET SAUVIGNON.
FROM THE MEDOC REGION ON THE LEFT BANK OF THE GIRONDE.
BECAUSE TOMINE IS UNAVAILABLE?

HUH?
I REFUSE.


AND YET SHE SPECIFICALLY PULLS ME IN TO TASTE 100 WINES? THERE'S SOMETHING FISHY HERE.
SHE WILL BE ARRANGING A REPLACEMENT WINE HERSELF.

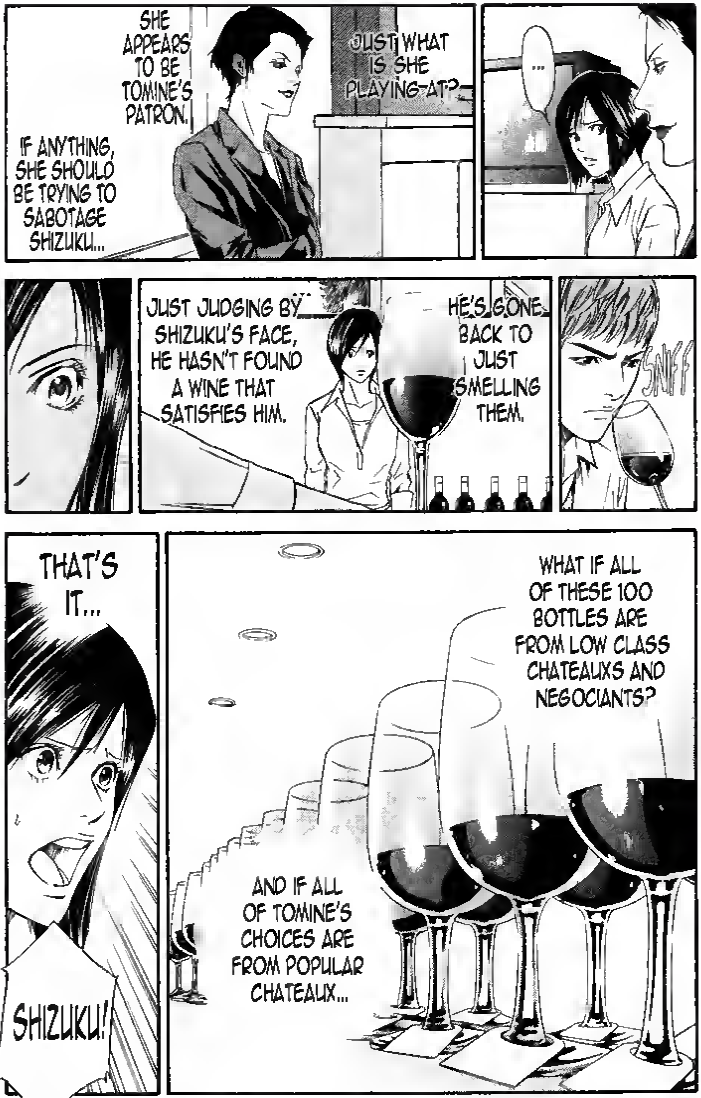

YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A CABERNET-BASED WINE FOR THE COMPETITION, THIS IS YOUR LUCKY CHANCE.
WHY? SHIZUKU, THIS IS YOUR CHANCE.
SHE'S TRYING TO TEST ME. I DON'T LIKE IT.


WHAT?
RUNNING AWAY?
HEY, WAIT
LET'S GO, MIYABI.
I'M NOT PLAYING THIS GAME.

WHAT IF THIS IS ALL A SETUP, SO THAT THE WINE YOU CHOOSE LOSES TO THE 4 WINES TOMINE CHOOSES?
YOU'LL HAVE LOST TO HIM A SECOND TIME...
AND THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE AFRAID OF... NO?
YOU'RE RUNNING AWAY BECAUSE YOU'RE SCARED OF LOSING TO THE WINES TOMINE CHOSE.
IT'S ONLY NATURAL. YOU WERE DEFEATED ONCE AND LOST YOUR HOME AS A RESULT. IF YOU LOST HERE, WHAT WOULD BECOME OF THE SEARCH FOR THE "TEARS OF GOD" AND "THE 12 APOSTLES"?
YOU CANNOT POSSIBLY STRUGGLE THROUGH THE CHALLENGE THAT YOUR FATHER HAS SET THE TWO OF YOU.
THE OUTCOME OF THE CONTEST SURROUNDING YUTAKA KANZAKI'S PRECIOUS WINE COLLECTION WAS NEVER IN DOUBT.
HEY! THAT'S GOING TOO FAR!

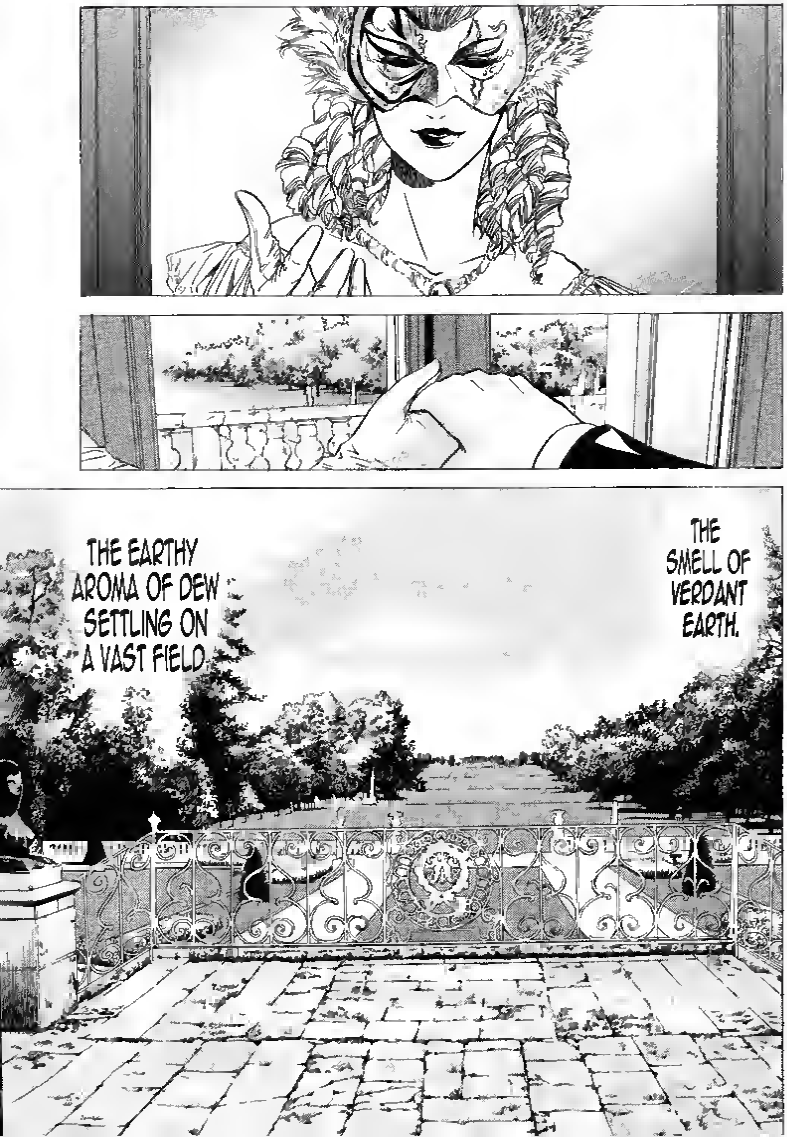
HEH.
YOU DID, DID YOU?
SHIZUKU WON TOMINE'S ADMIRATION FOR HIS MARRIAGE OF WINE AND FRENCH CUISINE.
IS THAT NOT A VICTORY FOR SHIZUKU?
MS. SAIONJI, YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW THIS, BUT...
EVEN MORE REASON NOT TO RUN AWAY THEN.
I'LL TELL TOMINE ABOUT THIS.
IF YOU LEAVE...
I'LL SAY YOU RAN AWAY WITH YOUR TAIL BETWEEN YOUR LEGS.
I'LL TELL HIM THAT A CERTAIN YUTAKA KANZAKI'S SON WAS TOO SCARED TO FACE THE RENOWNED CRITIC TOMINE ISSEI...

I JUST HAVE TO CHOOSE ONE BOTTLE, RIGHT?
I'LL DO IT.
JUST WHERE DO YOU...
FINE!
....
YES SIR.
CAN I START FROM THE FIRST?
PLEASE USE THIS SPITTOON.
SHIZUKU...
THAT'S MORE LIKE IT.


SHE APPEARS TO BE TOMINE'S PATRON.
IF ANYTHING, SHE SHOULD BE TRYING TO SABOTAGE SHIZUKU...
JUST WHAT IS SHE PLAYING AT?
...
JUST JUDGING BY SHIZUKU'S FACE, HE HASN'T FOUND A WINE THAT SATISFIES HIM.
HE'S GONE BACK TO JUST SMELLING THEM.
SNIFF
THAT'S IT...
SHIZUKU!
WHAT IF ALL OF THESE 100 BOTTLES ARE FROM LOW CLASS CHATEAUXS AND NEGOCIANTS?
AND IF ALL OF TOMINE'S CHOICES ARE FROM POPULAR CHATEAUX...

DON'T DO THIS. LET'S JUST GO HOME.
IT'S A TRAP.
THERE WERE NEVER ANY GOOD WINES IN HERE TO CHOOSE.
SHE JUST WANTS TO SCARE AND EMBARRASS YOU...
THIS...
THIS DEEP RUBY COLOUR.
IT'S AS CLEAR AS THE PRECIOUS GEM ITSELF.

A MASQUERADE.
THIS IS...
AND WHAT IS THIS...?
THE CHARACTERISTIC CRÈME DE CASSIS OF CABERNET SAUVIGNON.
NUANCE OF ALMOND...
AH, YES.
THIS SWEET SCENT...
AND...
LIKE A SAVOURY SMOKE...


THE EARTHY AROMA OF DEW SETTLING ON A VAST FIELD.
THE SMELL OF VERDANT EARTH.

DID YOU SEE SOMETHING IN THIS WINE?
SHIZUKU?
A MASQUERADE.
ARISTOCRATS DRESSED IN MYSTERIOUS COSTUMES, AS THOUGH THE ELEGANT PARTY WAS AN ILLUSION FOR THE NIGHT.
I SAW IT CLEARLY THROUGH THIS WINE.
!!
THIS IS DELICIOUS!
A MASQUERADE...?

WHAT DID YOU SAY?
MAYBE CHATEAU MARGAUX!
THIS MUST BE ONE OF THE 5 GREAT CHATEUAX!
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THIS WINE, ELEGANT? A MASQUE-RADE?
THIS IS TOO MUCH!
YOU THINK IT'S THAT FANTASTIC?
I'LL SAY IT NOW, IT SHOULD BE A GREAT SELLER.
YEAH, ANY OLD BOOZE-HOUND WOULD BE ABLE TO PICK IT.
HOW AMUSING.
SHALL WE PUT THIS WINE IN TODAY'S TASTING, THEN?

I WILL SUPPLY YOU WITH THIS WINE FOR YOUR COMPETITION, COMPLETELY FREE OF CHARGE.
NOW, IF BY SOME CHANCE THIS WINE HAPPENS TO OUTSELL THE OTHER FOUR...
HOWEVER, IF EVERYONE PASSES OVER IT...
YOU WILL FULFILL ONE REQUEST FROM ME, UNCONDI-TIONALLY.
THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM, IS IT?

#31 END

Translation
IMARI
Edit
NEMESIS
BLURK
ALTEREGGO
Little Black Butterflies